

60p

# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Whose scareships?  
The talking mongoose  
Consulting the I Ching  
The greatest miracle?  
Spirits in the studio

97



Aus & NZ\$1.75 SAR1.75 IR75p US\$1.50



# THE Unexplained

MYSTERIES OF MIND SPACE & TIME

Published weekly by Orbis Publishing Limited  
Orbis House, 20/22 Bedfordbury, London WC2N 4BT

## Volume 9 Issue 97

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## Contents

### Talking mongoose

#### THE MONGOOSE THAT TALKED

A review of the renowned case of a small shy animal that – it was claimed – could talk

*Melvin Harris*

1921

### Divination

#### I CHING: ENQUIRE WITHIN

The ancient art of divination by the *I Ching* proves effective even today – we look at the method

*Brian Innes*

1926

### Spirit photography

#### AN ENTERPRISING SPIRIT

Appearances of 'extras' in photographs have long been regarded as fraud. We consider alternative theories

*Frederick Goodman*

1930

### Bible mysteries

#### THE GOSPEL TRUTH

Did Christ really rise from the dead in his physical body as the Bible states? We evaluate the evidence

*David Christie-Murray*

1934

### British sareships

#### WHO SENT THE SCARESHIPS?

Where did the strange airships seen over Britain in 1909 come from? And what of the next scare in 1913?

*Nigel Watson*

1938

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## In next week's issue

Creatures great and small feature throughout the issue – from animals that have come from nowhere to appear on photographs in **Spirit photography**, to the elusive furry creature that speaks perfectly good English in **Talking mongoose**. And we tell, for the first time in the English language, the full story of one of the most bizarre tales in modern science. In **Mysterious man-beasts** you can read how Belgian zoologist Dr Bernard Heuvelmans heard of the frozen corpse of an extraordinary animal – which, he came to believe, was a previously unknown hominid. Continuing the probe into the phenomena surrounding **Borley Rectory**, we describe the weird events at the local church. And lastly, in **Mind and brain**, a distinguished contributor suggests why our memories may not be in the brain – but elsewhere!

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**From a remote hilltop on the Isle of Man there came, in the 1930s, news of an amazing talking animal – a mongoose that was often heard but seldom seen. MELVIN HARRIS investigates the story of ‘Gef’ and the family he haunted**

THE AFFAIR of the talking mongoose caused a great deal of excitement in the early 1930s. Initially called the ‘talking weasel’, this amazing creature lived in a remote place on the Isle of Man and, so the newspaper accounts said, did not just repeat words like a parrot. It used words with an understanding of their meaning. Indeed, according to the family with whom the creature lived, it gave direct answers to questions and made spontaneous comments – some of them quite witty and knowledgeable.

The animal haunted a place called Doarlish Cashen, an isolated farmstead perched over 700 feet (215 metres) up on the west coast of the island. It was a cheerless terrain without trees or shrubs. Even the nearest neighbours were out of view, over a mile (1.6 kilometres) away. Ordinarily there would be little to attract anyone to Doarlish Cashen. But, in September 1931, the rumours of the talking weasel sent the journalists scrambling up the forbidding hill to meet the Irving family who lived at the farm.

A rare picture of Gef, the talking mongoose – centre of a media sensation in the early 1930s. Usually Gef would not show himself even to the family with whom he lived – or whom he haunted – on the Isle of Man. But, so the family said, he allowed this photograph to be taken by Voirrey Irving, the daughter of the house. The wonderful talking animal, often witty and as often insulting, managed to elude all his many investigators

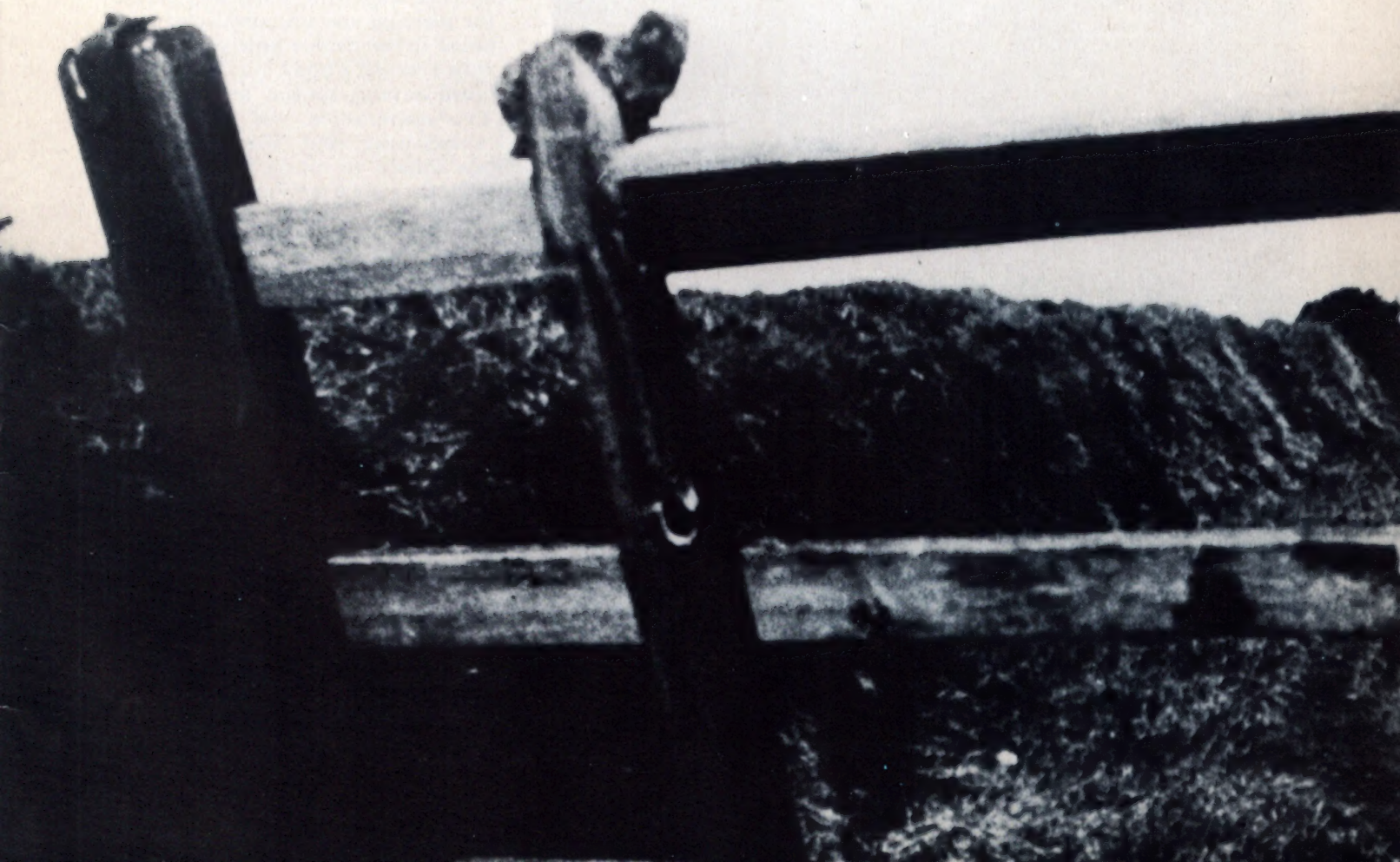
The head of the family was James Irving, a retired commercial traveller approaching 60. An intelligent man with mild, benign features, he was known as an engaging talker and raconteur. He seemed to keep his cheerfulness and good humour despite the fact that his farmstead production had steadily declined, reducing his income to a mere 15 shillings a week.

His wife Margaret was a few years younger than he. She was said to be tallish with a ‘dignified bearing, upright and square of carriage’. Her grey hair rose primly above her forehead ‘... to frame her most compelling feature – two magnetic eyes that haunt the visitor with their almost uncanny power’. It was all too easy to draw the conclusion that Margaret Irving was the dominant personality in the household.

The Irvings’ daughter Voirrey was 13 but old for her years. She seemed a reserved and undemonstrative child, hardly a scholar but obviously intelligent. And she took an intelligent and eager interest in anything to do with animals, reading any article or book she could get that dealt with them. By contrast, she was also fascinated by mechanical devices such as motor cars, aeroplanes and cameras.

Voirrey’s knowledge of animals was not just theoretical but also practical. She was

# The mongoose that talked





## Talking mongoose

fully experienced in handling sheep and goats. And she had devised a successful way to catch rabbits. She would roam the hills with her sheepdog Mona until a rabbit was sighted. While Mona 'pointed' the prey and put it in a frozen mesmerised state, Voirrey would slowly creep up behind and kill the rabbit with a sharp blow to the head. The significance of her skills in this regard came out later.

Of the many newspaper reporters who met the Irvings, the luckiest came from the *Manchester Daily Dispatch*, for he was the only one to hear the talking weasel. He wrote of his successful mission:

The mysterious 'man-weasel' . . . has spoken to me today. Investigation of the most remarkable animal story that has ever been given publicity . . . leaves me in a state of considerable perplexity. Had I heard a weasel speak? I do not know, but I do know that I've heard today a voice which I should never have imagined could issue from a human throat.

He left the house puzzled and impressed but fully convinced that the Irvings were honest and responsible – unlikely to be the initiators

Right: the Irving family in their ill-lit home, known as Doarlish Cashen. From the left are Voirrey, her mother Margaret and her father Jim



Below: Voirrey and her dog Mona. Some investigators hinted that Gef might be the creation of this lonely and intelligent girl, but this was not proved conclusively



of an elaborate and sustained practical joke.

His next report, however, was more guarded:

Does the solution of the mystery of the 'man-weasel' of Doarlish Cashen lie in the dual personality of the 13-year-old girl, Voirrey Irving? That is the question that leaps to my mind after hearing the piercing and uncanny voice attributed to the elusive little yellow beast with a weasel's body. . . . Yesterday I heard several spoken sentences. . . . The conversation was between the 'weasel-voice' and Mrs Irving, who was unseen to me in another room, while the girl sat motionless in a chair at the table. I could see her reflection, although not very clearly, in a mirror on the other side of the room. She had her fingers to her lips. . . . The lips did not move, so far as I could see, but they were partly hidden by her fingers. When I edged my way into the room the voice ceased. The little girl continued to sit motionless, without taking any notice of us. She was sucking a piece of string, I now saw.

Remarkably, none of the eager visitors ever caught sight of the talking animal. They all had to rely on Jim Irving's description to picture it. He judged it to be about the size of 'a three-parts grown rat, without the tail' and thin enough to pass through a 1½-inch (4-centimetre) diameter hole. Its body was yellow like a ferret's, its long bushy tail was tinged with brown, and its face was shaped somewhat like a hedgehog's but with a flattened, pig-like snout. This description was based on the pooled information of the three





Doarlish Cashen, high on a cheerless hilltop with the nearest neighbour more than a mile (1.6 kilometres) away. The ramshackle house gave Gef plenty of scope for playing hide and seek

Irving, for each of them claimed to have seen the animal on separate occasions.

According to Jim Irving, their tiny lodger had first made itself known by barking, growling and spitting – all purely animal sounds. Irving took the sudden notion to try to teach the creature other kinds of noises. So he began to imitate animal and bird sounds and to name each creature as he made its sound. Within days, he claimed, the weasel would repeat the sounds as soon as the relevant animal or bird name was called out. The most astounding part of his experiment soon followed. 'My daughter then tried it with nursery rhymes, and no trouble was experienced in having them repeated.'

From then on there was no stopping the wily weasel. By February 1932 it was freely demonstrating its remarkable cleverness to the Irvings. Jim Irving wrote:

It announces its presence by calling either myself or my wife by our Christian names. . . . It apparently can see in the dark and described the movements of my hand. Its hearing powers are phenomenal. It is no use whispering: it detects the whisper 15 to 20 feet [4.5 to 6 metres] away, tells you that you are whispering, and repeats exactly what one has said.

When the ghost hunter Harry Price learned of the talking weasel, he acted swiftly by asking a colleague to visit the Irvings and file a report. Price called this investigator 'Captain Macdonald' to protect him from any unwanted publicity. Macdonald obliged

and turned up at the farmhouse on the evening of 26 February 1932. There he sat around for almost five hours – and heard and saw nothing. But as he left the place, he heard a shrill scream from inside the house – 'Go away. Who is that man?' The words were quite clear at first, then they tailed away into unintelligible squeals. When Macdonald hurried back into the house, the voice ceased. So he arranged to return early the next day.

The next day's vigil started with the Captain being shown some water trickling from a hole in the wall. He was solemnly assured that this was 'the animal performing its natural functions'. The vigil proved more fruitful later. In the evening, Voirrey and her mother went into the bedroom above the living room and within minutes a shrill voice started talking to Margaret Irving. This went on for a quarter of an hour. Then Macdonald appealed to the animal to show itself. 'I believe in you!' he shouted, hoping to charm the evasive weasel. But the squealed reply was final. 'No, I don't mean to stay long as I don't like you!' Macdonald then tried to creep up the stairs but slipped, making a deafening clatter. With that the creature screamed, 'He's coming!' So ended Macdonald's hoped-for ambush.

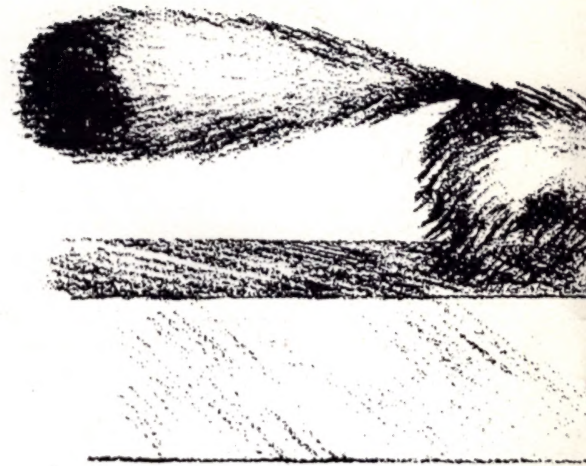
Ten days later, Charles Northwood –





again, not his real name – turned up at Doarlish Cashen. An old friend of Jim Irving, he came out of concern for the Irvings, and later he sent a favourable report to Price. By now, the family had christened the talking animal ‘Gef’ and had discovered that he was an Indian mongoose born in Delhi on 7 June 1852. These details ‘came from Gef himself’.

Once Northwood had settled in, Irving called out, ‘Come on Gef, Mr Northwood’s here. You promised to speak you know!’ But not a squeak was heard – until Voirrey went into the kitchen to prepare lunch. Then in a mild voice Gef said, ‘Go away Voirrey, go away.’ Two minutes later Gef began to speak again. Then, when Irving asked him to bark,



Right: Jim Irving points to Gef’s fingers appearing through the slats on the bedroom wall. All the pictures of the talking mongoose were uniformly poor and indistinct, leaving as much to the imagination as to the eye

Below: the wooden box-like structure known as ‘Gef’s Sanctum’, located in Voirrey’s room. On top is a chair that, according to the Irvings, the mongoose pushed around for exercise



he promptly did so. But he refused to sing his favourite song *Carolina moon*, even though the gramophone record was played to inspire him. Later still, Gef shouted, ‘Charlie, Charlie, Chuck, Chuck . . . Charlie my old sport! . . . Clear to the Devil if you don’t believe!’

Gef’s mood changed when he heard that Northwood’s son, Arthur, was due to arrive at the Irving farm. He grew threatening. ‘Tell Arthur not to come. He doesn’t believe. I won’t speak if he does come. I’ll blow his brains out with a thruppenny cartridge!’

Then he softened a little and returned to domestic small talk. ‘Have you ordered the rooster, James, from Simon Hunter? Mind you do so. Have you posted that letter?’ But a short while later his vicious side took over again. As Northwood put it:

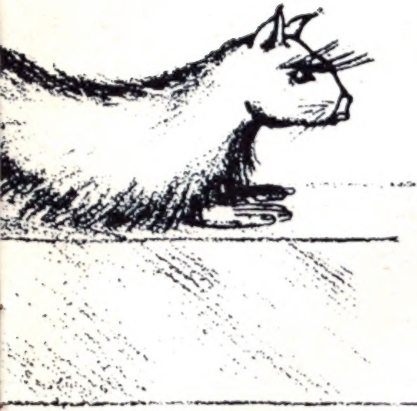
‘. . . from behind the boards in the sitting room, possibly some 25 to 30 feet [8 to 9 metres] away, I heard a very loud voice penetrating, and with some malice in it: ‘You don’t believe. You are a doubter,’ etc. This was very startling, and for the first time put a bit of a shiver through me. Equal to a couple of irascible women’s voices put together! I said: ‘I do believe.’ I had to shout this.

Then came the probing query, ‘Charlie. . . is Arthur coming?’ followed by a screech and a loud thump.

By this time Northwood had to leave, which meant the end of the encounter. But on his way down the hill he heard some screeches behind him and each of these was identified by Irving as having been made by Gef.

Northwood made a second visit a few days afterwards, bringing his sister-in-law and niece. This time, he claimed, his sister-in-law and her little girl heard the talking mongoose as well. ‘Gef said the name of my sister-in-law’s child and said that she had a powder puff in her bag.’ He conceded that this was not very telling because both these facts were well-known to Voirrey. Despite that, he remained convinced that Gef was not Voirrey, but ‘some extraordinary animal which has developed the power of speech by





some extraordinary process.'

The Northwood visits were the last productive ones for the next three years. But that long timegap did not mean that Gef had gone to earth. On the contrary, the Irvings stated that he became more entertaining and more adventurous during those years. And Jim Irving was able to produce a diary that recorded many of the mongoose's new sayings and antics.

From this account we learn that Gef began killing rabbits to help the family budget. After killing them he would leave them near the house and report the exact position to the family. Then he started bringing home other useful things: a paintbrush one day, then a pair of pincers, then a pair of gloves.

songs and delighted the family with his renderings of *Home on the range*, *The Isle of Capri* and the Manx national anthem, as well as some Spanish and Welsh ditties.

More surprisingly, Gef allowed himself to be handled – though he still refused to show himself in full. Margaret Irving was permitted to place her finger in his mouth and feel his teeth. She was also graciously allowed to shake one of Gef's paws – which, she said, had 'three long fingers and a thumb'. These paws were obviously extremely versatile, since Irving claimed that Gef had opened drawers with them, struck matches and operated an electric torch.

The irascible Gef grew very free with his insults. When Irving was slow at opening his mail, Gef shouted, 'Read it out you fat-headed gnome!' When a visitor said she was returning to South Africa, he screamed, 'Tell her I hope the propeller drops off!'

### A fascinating mystery

The formerly shy and retiring talking mongoose finally even agreed to pose for some photographs taken by Voirrey. But these were of poor quality and revealed almost no details. Then boldness prompted Gef to leave samples of his fur for examination. These samples were forwarded to Captain Macdonald who passed them on to Harry Price. In turn, Price sent them for examination to F. Martin Duncan, an authority on fur and hair at the Zoological Society of London.

While Price waited for the expert's opinion, Captain Macdonald visited Doarlish Cashen once more. Yet again, he heard Gef's voice but saw nothing of the elusive creature. This helped Price to decide to make an inspection of the house himself.

What sealed Price's decision to visit Doarlish Cashen was a revealing report from Duncan on the alleged mongoose hairs. Duncan's letter of 23 April 1935 read:

I have carefully examined them microscopically and compared them with hairs of known origin in my collection. As a result I can definitely state that the specimen hairs never grew upon a mongoose, nor are they those of a rat, rabbit, hare, squirrel or other rodent, or from a sheep, goat or cow. . . . I am inclined to think that these hairs have probably been taken from a longish-haired dog or dogs. . . . When you visit the farm keep a look-out for any dog . . . with a slight curly hair and a fawn and dark colour.

On 30 July 1935 Harry Price trudged up the hill to the Irving home on the trail of the talking mongoose. With him went R.S. Lambert, editor of the *Listener*. The two hoped to solve a fascinating mystery. And they bore Duncan's final words well in mind.

*For the bemusing aftermath of the talking mongoose sensation, see page 1946*



Top: a drawing of Gef from Harry Price's book on the talking mongoose affair. Irving said that he had got the description he gave to the artist from Gef himself, since the mongoose so shyly stayed out of sight

Above: two mongooses in their natural habitat. The Indian species, of which Gef claimed to be one, is famous for its snake-killing skill. But the mongoose is a predator of small mammals as well, and Gef concentrated on killing rabbits

In the house itself, he grew increasingly playful. He would bounce a rubber ball up and down in time with gramophone records and push a lightweight chair around to get exercise. According to the diary, all these events were staged on top of a wooden box-like structure in Voirrey's room, known as 'Gef's Sanctum'.

As a return for his services and entertainment he expected, in fact demanded, choice titbits. For him the orthodox mongoose diet was out. Gef insisted on offerings of lean bacon, sausages, bananas, biscuits, sweets and chocolates. These were carefully placed on one of the crossbeams of the roof so that he could sneak up and grab them when he chose. For Gef continued to be abnormally shy and hated being watched. The family had only brief glimpses of him on rare occasions.

During this period, Gef demonstrated both that he could speak in other languages, even if he used only the odd word and short phrase, and that he could perform some elementary arithmetic. He showed that he could read by yelling out some of the items printed in the newspapers left around the house. He also increased his repertoire of



# I Ching: enquire within

**One of the oldest and most flexible of divinatory methods is also the most fascinating. BRIAN INNES continues his discussion of divination with a brief look at the Chinese Book of Change**

CONFUCIUS SAID: 'If some years were added to my life, I would give 50 to the study of the *I Ching*, and might then escape falling into great error.' That was in 481 BC, when he was already nearly 70 years old, and had written a series of commentaries on the text of the book the Chinese call *I Ching*, which means 'the Book of Change'.

The *I Ching* is one of the oldest and most respected oracle books in the world. In its present form it can be traced back at least 3000 years – and even at that time it was already considered venerable, being based upon more primitive forms of oracle.

The Book of Change draws its basic philosophy from the ancient Chinese faith known as Tao. The word 'tao' is most usefully translated as 'way' – as in the Christian expression 'I am the Way, the

Far right: K'ung Fu-tzu, the great Chinese philosopher known to us as Confucius

Below: a romanticised Western view of the ceremony involved in consulting the *I Ching*: the sticks are being passed through the smoke from an incense burner, while the enquirer makes his kowtows before them

Truth, the Life' – but no English word provides a really satisfactory equivalent, and even in Chinese it is susceptible of a variety of meanings. Indeed, as one Chinese inscription puts it: 'the Tao that can be put into words is not Everlasting Tao.'

Taoist writings are full, in fact, of negative definitions: 'power and learning is adding more and more to oneself, Tao is subtracting day by day; rigour is death, yielding is life; as laws increase, crimes increase.'

To the Taoist sage the world is not made up of discrete particles of time and space: everything is part of everything else, and reality consists of ceaseless change. The river that one paddled in yesterday is not the river one swims in today; and so the Universe is seen as a moving pattern in which nothing is permanent. So the *I Ching* is different from other oracle books: it does not regard the past, the present and the future as fixed; instead, it treats time and fate as dynamic and flowing, never the same from one moment to the next. The advice that one obtains by consulting the *I Ching*, therefore, is of possibilities: if you act in a particular way it is likely to result in such-and-such an outcome.

As a tool of divination, the *I Ching* is very similar to geomancy in principle (see page 1901); but the divinatory figures that are generated are composed of six lines instead of four, and therefore there are a possible 64, rather than 16, figures. Moreover, where the







Below: the philosophy of Tao contains a strong sexual element, and intercourse is regarded as the interchange of yin and yang between the two partners. The cup represents Autumn Days, the last of the Thirty Heaven and Earth postures: 'The lord Yang lies on his back, his hand at the back of his head, and lady Yin sits on his stomach, but turning her face to his feet'



Witness-Judge procedure of geomancy results in only 128 different interpretations, each of the *I Ching* figures contains within itself 64 possible variations, and can generate at least one further figure: the total number of interpretations, therefore, is:

$$64 \times 64 + 64 = 4160.$$

Taoist philosophy classifies all the energies of the Universe under two headings, yin and yang. Yin is passive, watery, pertaining to the Moon, essentially female; yang is active, fiery, pertaining to the Sun, essentially male. The lines that make up the divinatory figures are described as either yin or yang lines; a broken line represents yin, a continuous line yang.

The six-line figures are known as hexagrams. Each can be regarded as made up of two three-line figures called trigrams. Since each line of each trigram can be either continuous or broken, the number of trigrams is  $2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8$ . And since each hexagram is made up of two trigrams, the number of hexagrams is  $8 \times 8 = 64$ .

The traditional way in which these figures are generated is long and complicated. A bundle of 50 dried yarrow stalks is required; yarrow was used because it had a certain holy significance to the Chinese. One of the stalks is set aside, and is not used in obtaining the hexagram; there is some dispute among Western writers as to whether the fiftieth stalk plays any part in the tradition of the *I Ching* or not.

The remaining 49 stalks are then separated into two piles. After this, the procedure is as follows:

1. One stalk from the right-hand pile is placed between the little finger and ring finger of the left hand.

2. Stalks are removed four at a time from the left-hand pile until four or less are left. These stalks are placed between the ring finger and the middle finger of the left hand.

3. Stalks are removed four at a time from the right-hand pile until four or less are left. These stalks are placed between the middle finger and the index finger of the left hand.

The stalks held between the fingers of the left hand will now total either 5 or 9:

$$\begin{aligned} 1 + 1 + 3 &= 5 \\ \text{or } 1 + 3 + 1 &= 5 \\ \text{or } 1 + 2 + 2 &= 5 \\ \text{or } 1 + 4 + 4 &= 9 \end{aligned}$$

These stalks are then put aside, and the process is repeated with the remaining 40 or 44 stalks. At the end, the stalks held between the fingers will total either 4 or 8:

$$\begin{aligned} 1 + 1 + 2 &= 4 \\ \text{or } 1 + 2 + 1 &= 4 \\ \text{or } 1 + 4 + 3 &= 8 \\ \text{or } 1 + 3 + 4 &= 8 \end{aligned}$$

This pile is also set aside, and the process repeated with the remaining stalks. Once more, the stalks held in the left hand will total either 4 or 8.

There are now three little piles: the first contains 5 or 9 stalks, the second and third

each contain 4 or 8. There are therefore eight possible combinations of these three quantities. These provide a yin or yang line:

5 + 4 + 4		Old yang line
9 + 8 + 8		Old yin line
5 + 8 + 8		Young yang line
9 + 8 + 4		
9 + 4 + 8		
5 + 4 + 8		Young yin line
5 + 8 + 4		
9 + 4 + 4		

The 'old' lines are also known as 'moving' lines: an Old yang line is seen to be changing into a Young yin line, and an Old yin line into a Young yang line. Each of the four types of line is also given a 'ritual number':

Old yin line	6
Young yang line	7
Young yin line	8
Old yang line	9

So far, only a single line has been generated. This is drawn as the bottom line of the hexagram, and then the procedure must be repeated five times more, the lines being drawn in ascending order.

Producing a single hexagram, therefore, can take five minutes or more. Those who let the *I Ching* govern their lives have developed a simpler and quicker method that requires only three coins. Chinese coins traditionally had an inscribed face and a blank or 'reverse' face – the side of a modern coin that gives the value is considered the inscribed side: if the blank face is given the value 3, and the inscribed face the value 2, tossing the three coins will provide a total of 6, 7, 8 or 9 – and so, taking this as the ritual number, the first line is obtained. It is possible, in this way, to obtain the hexagram in less than a minute.

What follows the obtaining of the hexagram? The texts of the *I Ching* are of several different periods and different kinds. First comes a description of the hexagram itself, in terms of the two trigrams of which it is composed; then comes the Judgement, which is said to have been composed by King Wen, the founder of the Chou dynasty (c. 1100 BC). This is a rather brief analysis of the hexagram as a whole.

### 'The superior man'

The next text, the Commentary, is traditionally attributed to Confucius, although it is improbable that he himself wrote it. This is generally longer than the Judgement, and takes note of the significance of the individual lines making up the whole hexagram. The third text, the Image, is succinct; it describes the kind of action that the sensible person – referred to usually as 'the superior man' – should take. This text has also been attributed to Confucius.

The final group of texts were composed by King Wen's son, the Duke of Chou, who destroyed the Shang dynasty in 1027 BC. These were written about 40 years after Wen's text: they are brief and rather cryptic, and they deal with the occurrence of Old



yang and yin lines within the hexagram.

One or two specific examples will illustrate the nature of these different texts, and the way in which they are interpreted.

In hexagram 63, Chi Chi – Climax and After – the upper trigram is K'an, which symbolises dangerous deep water, the Moon, the winter season, the north, the middle son, an ear, the 'element' wood and the colour red; the lower trigram is Li, representing fire, the Sun, summer, the south, the middle daughter, the eye, and the colour yellow.

The text of *I Ching* describes Chi Chi as being an evolutionary phase of hexagram 11, T'ai, which means Peace. Hexagrams are read from the bottom, and the 'strong' positions are considered to be lines 1, 3 and 5. In T'ai, lines 1, 2 and 3 are occupied by yang lines, while lines 4, 5 and 6 are yin; in Chi Chi, the yang lines have migrated upward to their appropriate positions, displacing the yin lines to position 2, 4 and 6. Thus, says the text, everything is in its proper place. But although this is a very favourable hexagram, it still gives grounds for caution: for it is when equilibrium has been reached that any sudden displacement may cause order to revert to disorder.

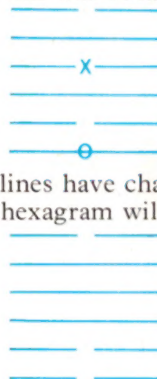
The Judgement on Chi Chi reads: 'After the climax there is success in small matters. Righteous persistence brings its reward. Good fortune in the beginning, but disorder in the end.'

Now comes the Commentary. 'Chi Chi indicates progress in small matters. The

proper position of the yang and yin lines shows that righteous persistence will be rewarded; the weak line at the centre of the lower trigram indicates good fortune in the beginning, but the way peters out, efforts come to an end, and disorder returns.' This is one of a number of cases in which the Commentary seems to add very little to the Judgement, but in other cases it can be of considerable value in elucidating the often obscure phrases of the Judgement.

The verses of the Duke of Chou refer to the occurrence of 'moving' lines, the Old yang and Old yin lines. The bottom line of Chi Chi is a yang line: if it is an Old yang line, with a ritual number 9, then the verse for that line should also be read.

These Old lines are also moving into Young lines. Suppose, for instance, that the hexagram Chi Chi was obtained as follows:



When the old lines have changed into their opposites, the hexagram will be:



This is a very different hexagram. It is 62,



Above right: how the sticks are held between the fingers of the left hand

Above far right: in this porcelain dish the shepherdess, a yin symbol, is surrounded by two male and one female sheep: these sheep represent the trigram Tui, or Joy

Right: an example of an English translation of the text of the *I Ching*, giving the Judgement, the Commentary and the typically cryptic verses written on the individual lines

## 63 Chi Chi Climax and After

### The trigrams:

above: K'an dangerous deep water

below: Li fire, brightness

This hexagram represents an evolutionary phase of hexagram 11, T'ai, Peace. The strong yang lines have moved upward into their appropriately strong positions, displacing the yin lines into their proper weak positions. Everything is in its proper place. But although this is a very favourable hexagram, it still gives grounds for caution: for it is when equilibrium has been reached that any sudden movement may cause order to revert to disorder.

### The Judgement

After the climax there is a success in small matters. Righteous persistence brings its reward. Good fortune in the beginning, but disorder in the end.

### Commentary

Chi Chi indicates progress in small matters. The proper position of the yang and yin lines shows that righteous persistence will be rewarded; the weak line at the centre of the lower trigram indicates good fortune in the beginning, but the way peters out, efforts come to an end, and disorder returns.

### The Image

Water over the fire, the image of Chi Chi.

The superior man, accordingly, gives due thought to the misfortunes to come, and takes precautions in advance.

### The Lines

In the bottom line, NINE signifies:

Like a driver who brakes his chariot,  
Or a fox with a wet tail.  
No blame.

In the second line, SIX signifies:

She loses her carriage curtain.  
Do not run after it.  
For in seven days it will be recovered.

In the third line, NINE signifies:

The Illustrious Ancestor  
The emperor Wu Ting  
Attacked the country of devils.  
Three years he took in subduing it.  
Small men are not fit for such enterprises.

In the fourth line, SIX signifies:

The finest clothes turn to rags.  
Be careful all day long.

In the fifth line, NINE signifies:

The neighbour in the east sacrifices an ox:  
But it is the neighbour in the west,  
With his small spring sacrifice,  
Who is blessed for his sincerity.

In the sixth line, SIX signifies:

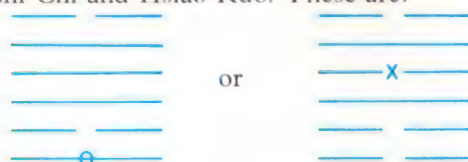
His head is in the water.  
Misfortune.





Hsiao Kuo. The Judgement, Commentary and Image for this second figure should also be read for interpretation, but since the lines have now moved the verses of the Duke of Chou are not significant.

One can go further: if the lines are moving independently of one another, there are two possible intermediate hexagrams between Chi Chi and Hsiao Kuo. These are:

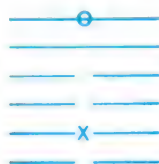


The first is 49, Ko; the second is 39, Cheng. Reading the texts for these two hexagrams, but remembering that only one can be the true intermediate, may help in the interpretation.

One has to be very careful in trying to present an imaginary worked example of the use of the *I Ching*: too often, indeed, one finds that the hexagram obtained is Meng:

I do not seek out the inexperienced; he comes to find me. When he first asks my advice, I instruct him. But if he comes a second or a third time, that is troublesome, and I do not advise the troublesome. . . .

As an experiment, I asked the *I Ching* 'whether it would be wise for me to finish this article tonight'. The hexagram I obtained was 20, Kuan:



Kuan signifies contemplation: 'the worshipper who has washed his hands, but not yet made the offering'. The upper trigram of Kuan is Sun, representing wind and gentleness; the lower trigram is K'un, the Earth, the passive. The Image of Kuan is the wind moving over the Earth. 'So did the kings of

old visit all parts of their kingdom, to see their people and give them instruction.

There is an Old yin line in the second line, which signifies:

Contemplation through the crack of the door

Is sufficient only for a housewife and the Old yang line in the sixth line signifies:

Contemplating himself

The superior man is without reproach.

It seems that *I Ching* is advising me not to continue with the article until I have had time to think about it some more; it also suggests that my time would be better occupied in ascertaining whether the editorial staff have any problems.

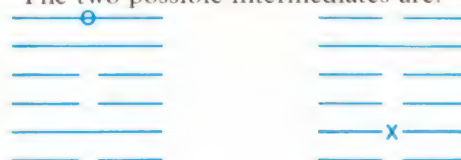
Now the moving lines must be allowed to develop, and the resultant hexagram is 29, K'an:



This is one of only eight hexagrams in which the trigram is doubled. In each trigram a strong yang line has plunged into the deep between two yin lines, as water lies in a deep ravine. The Judgement reads: 'Abyss upon abyss, danger piled on danger. But if you are sincere there is success locked up within.' The Commentary continues the theme, and the Image of K'an is: 'The water flows on and on to its destination; the image of the abyss upon the abyss. So the superior man walks in eternal virtue, instructing others in the conduct of their affairs.'

The last part of this text clearly relates to the advice given above – although the warnings of danger seem unnecessarily strong in such a minor matter. Can the intermediate hexagrams throw any light on the matter?

The two possible intermediates are:



These are, respectively, 59, Huan, and 8, Pi.

Huan signifies dispersal, and the advantageousness of travel. In the sixth line, the Old yang line signifies:

He disperses bloodiness  
Keeping evil at a distance  
Departing without blame.

Pi, on the other hand, is the image of holding together; it signifies those who follow the lead of the superior man.

It was only a light-hearted question, and it deserves a light-hearted answer. The *I Ching* has told me that it is time for me, and my staff, to stop work and go home!

*Understanding the Tarot cards – and how they understand us. See page 1966*





**Ghostly 'extras', spirit messages and materialisations of people and objects – these were the hallmarks of the professional psychic photographer. Were the spirit manifestations they produced genuine? FREDERICK GOODMAN weighs the evidence**

BY ITS VERY NATURE, psychic photography has from its beginnings been open both to the accusation of fraud and to fraud itself. Not a single established spirit photographer was free of taint – all, at one time or another, were the object of bitter intrigue, legal action or both. Yet many had genuine psychic abilities.

The Bostonian William Mumler was almost certainly the first person in the United States to earn a living as a professional spirit photographer. He became very well-known, and it is clear from surviving pictures that his mediumistic abilities were quite remarkable. Several investigations failed to unearth any fraud on his part. Nonetheless, Mumler fell foul of the law in 1869 – but it was as a result of a journalistic campaign whose aim was to create scandal. The spirit photographer was eventually charged as a swindler, but the evidence brought to the court was so overwhelmingly in his favour that the case was dismissed.

Mumler's most famous spirit picture is one taken towards the end of 1865, about four years before his trial. The sitter, who visited Mumler incognito, was no less a person than Mary Todd Lincoln, then recently widowed by the assassination of President



## An enterprising spirit

Abraham Lincoln. In the print is a recognisable image of Lincoln, standing behind her and laying his hands upon her shoulders.

After Mumler's death in 1884, another spirit photographer came to notice on the west coast of the United States. This was the Californian Edward Wyllie. Dr H.A. Reid, who was a specialist in the history of 19th-century psychic photography, said of him:

As to the work of Edward Wyllie, the medium photographer, the proofs and testimonies that the phenomena were genuine and not trickery, were all so open, untrammelled, fair and conclusive that to reject them is to reject the validity of all human testimony.

Wyllie led an adventurous life of travel in India and New Zealand before settling in Pasadena, California, in 1886 as a photographer. He had been psychic since childhood and his psychic leanings came to the fore rapidly with the appearance of unwanted 'extras' on his photographs. These

spirit forms at first threatened to interfere with his business, but when he realised that the extras were often recognisable to his sitters, he changed his line of business accordingly. Wyllie was able to photograph spirit forms 60 per cent of the time. The number of 'recognitions' among these was substantial. His highly distinctive style is characterised by several extras upon a single plate. For example, a portrait of J.R. Mercer contains the spirit forms of his mother and his wife, a bunch of flowers and a spirit message signed 'Elisabeth B. Mercer'.

In the decades in which Wyllie was the foremost of spirit photographers in the United States, the most famous and versatile of English mediums was William Eglinton. Though Eglinton was from time to time unmasked as a fraud (see page 1847), he had undoubted psychic powers. Unlike the majority of Spiritualists of his day, he was able at times to work in daylight. He would often permit photographs to be made and one





Left: the widowed Mary Todd Lincoln with the spirit of President Abraham Lincoln. The picture was taken in Boston, Massachusetts, USA, by William Mumler, the first professional spirit photographer, the year that Lincoln was assassinated

Below: the English medium William Eglinton (right) seen with the remarkable materialisation he produced in full view of witnesses and a photographer

Below right: the sitter's mother and wife, a spirit message and some flowers are the kind of 'extra' that typify Edward Wyllie's distinctive style of psychic photography

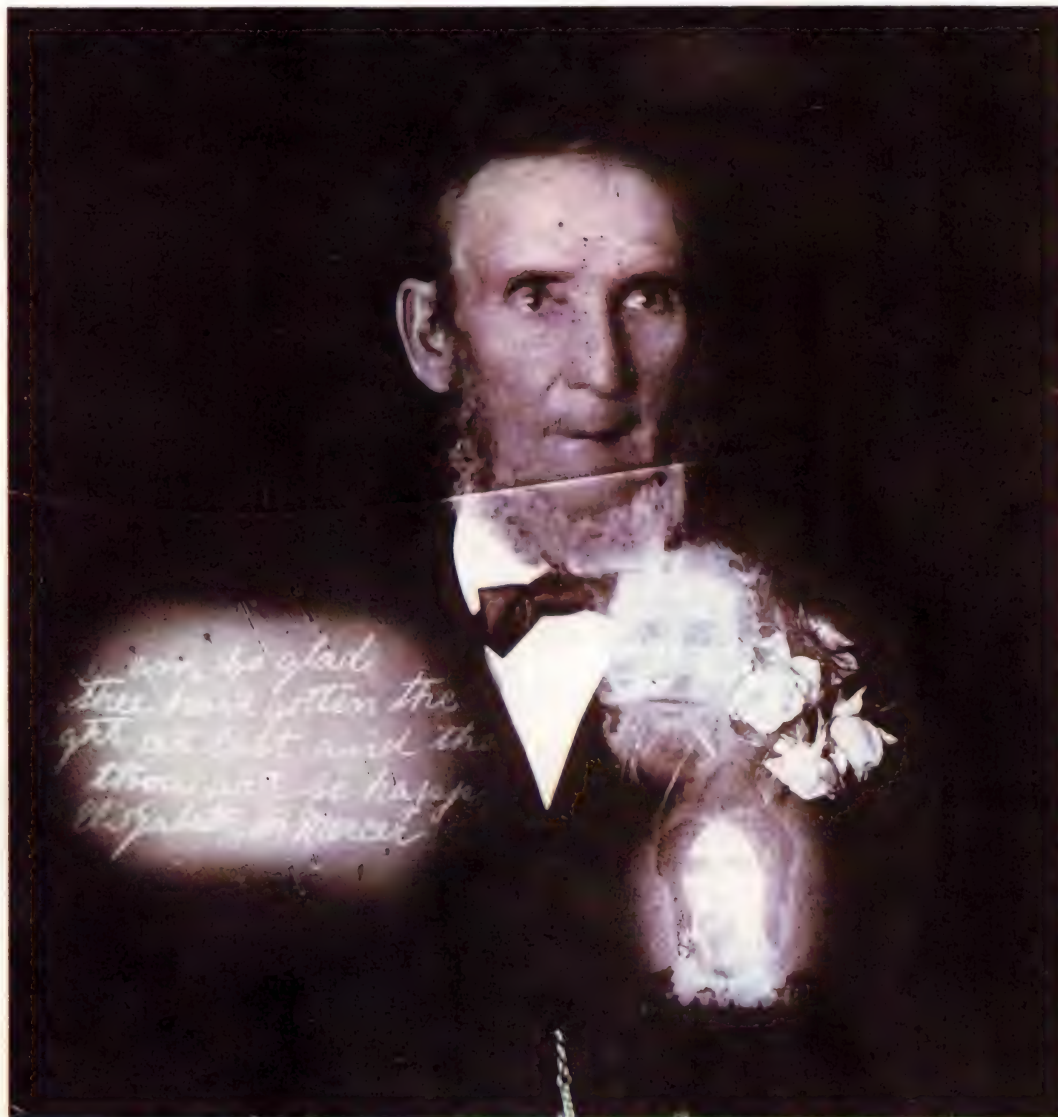
remarkable picture shows a complete materialisation. This was witnessed and described by Eglinton's biographer, John S. Farmer:

At this time his breathing became increasingly laboured and deep. Then, standing in full view, by a quick movement of his fingers, he gently drew forth, apparently from under his morning coat, a dingy white-looking substance. He drew it from him at right angles and allowed it to fall down his left side. As it reached the ground it increased in volume and covered his left leg from the knee downwards. The mass of white material on the ground increased in bulk and commenced to pulsate, move up and down and sway from side to side. Its height increased and shortly afterwards it quickly grew into a form of full stature, completely enveloped in the white material. The upper part of the medium then drew back and displayed the bearded face of a full-length materialised spirit, considerably taller than himself. . . .

The only method of making photographs

of materialised figures in the seance room was by means of the magnesium light, which was said to have a deleterious effect on the medium as well as on the spirit. Even so, some of the most impressive of 19th-century spirit photographs were made by means of the magnesium flare. Among these pictures is a series made during the seances of the Spiritualist Madame d'Esperance, who left fascinating memoirs of her dealings with leading Victorian mediums, investigators and spirit photographers. In her archives there is a picture taken in March 1890 of the fully materialised form of a beautiful 15-year-old Arab girl called Yolande, who would materialise frequently (see page 1846). Indeed she became the medium's most constant spirit companion. Yolande would take approximately 15 minutes to materialise into human form. A description of the process has been left by one of the members of the d'Esperance circle:

First a flimsy, cloudy, patch of something white is observed on the floor, in front of the cabinet. It then gradually expands, visibly extending itself as if it were an animated patch of muslin,







Left: a spirit, perhaps of a Spanish girl called 'Ninia', taken during one of the many successful photographic seances conducted by Madame d'Esperance in the 1890s

Right: a spirit portrait of the American poet Walt Whitman (right) compared with his living likeness. It was taken by the English medium William Hope



Below: this ghostly nun is a partial materialisation photographed in 1918 by the medium Castelwitch



lying fold upon fold, on the floor, until extending about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  by 3 feet [75 by 90 centimetres] and having a depth of a few inches. . . . Presently it begins to rise slowly in or near the centre, as if a human head were underneath it, while the cloudy film on the floor begins to look more like muslin falling into folds about the portion so mysteriously rising. By the time it has attained two or more feet [60 centimetres], it looks as if a child were under it and moving its arms about in all directions. . . . Presently the arms rise considerably above the head and open outwards through a mass of cloud-like spirit drapery, and Yolande stands before us unveiled, graceful and beautiful, nearly 5 feet [1.5 metres] in height, having a turban-like headdress, from beneath which her long black hair hangs over her shoulders and down her back.

The dematerialisation was no less dramatic, though it took only between two and five minutes. The form suddenly fell 'into a heaped patch of drapery'. The drapery – Yolande's clothes – 'slowly but visibly melt into nothingness', said the witness.

The picture of Yolande is pleasant to the eye, but not all materialisations are quite so lovely to behold. They can be repulsive, both in the process of formation by the medium and in their final form.

The material by which spirits are given visible form is the mysterious substance called ectoplasm. It is exuded from the medium's body, most usually from one of the orifices, and the extrusions from the mouth

of the medium – or, in one case, from the nipples – are often repellent. Even when a materialised form has the power to walk in the manner of a living being, it may be only partially formed. One example of an unpleasant partial manifestation was photographed by the medium Castelwitch during seances in Lisbon in 1918. The spirit form was that of a nun, and it was so ghastly in appearance that one of those taking part in the seance actually broke down, begging the spirit not to come closer. A description by one witness to these seances and the nun's several materialisations captures something of the atmosphere:

We saw at first a kind of vapour, through which it was possible to distinguish the picture on the wall. This vapour grew a little longer, became thicker, and took the form of a spirit which gave us the impression of being a monk [*sic*] dressed in white. It advanced and drew back three times towards the red light, on its way it knocked on the table. Three times it disappeared and then reappeared, making the same movement.

Even the clinical description of this spirit nun by the psychologist and psychical researcher Baron von Schrenck-Notzing carries a sense of the macabre into the textbooks:

The phantom is flat, in spite of the very vivid facial expression. The face of the nun is veiled, and the upper body draped in a white fabric. It is remarkable in the fact that in this figure the whole right side (including the right ear, shoulder and arm) is entirely





missing, as if this part had, from top to bottom, been ripped off a life-sized portrait.

The hallmark of the professional spirit photographer is the ability to capture images of the dead that are recognisable to living relatives or friends. The professional with the highest record of such recognitions was the Frenchman Jean Buguet. While Mumler could claim 15 recognitions, and the Englishman Frederick Hudson 26, Buguet could claim 40 recognitions in his spirit photographs. Even had Buguet miraculously discovered a new way of making double exposures that would fool the photographic experts of his day, fraud on that scale would have been almost impossible. For many of the Buguet spirit forms were of people who had died before the invention of photography, so there were no originals to use for double exposures.

Buguet was, like Mumler, brought to trial. And as in Mumler's case, hundreds of favourable testimonials poured into the court. The trial was almost certainly rigged. Buguet was found guilty but, as one writer later commented, this 'did not and could not efface the facts of genuine psychic photography'. No more did it efface the fact of



Above right: Charlie and the 'extra' of his son, taken by Edward Wyllie as a test for psychical researchers. They wondered if a spirit would appear when the sitter was completely ignorant of Spiritualism – and Charlie, who was Chinese, filled the bill

Left: a typical early photograph by the Frenchman Jean Buguet, who produced a high percentage of 'extras' that were recognised by the living as being of the dead. Buguet was brought to trial and convicted of fraud, but still has many defenders of his abilities as a true psychic photographer



Buguet's ability as a spirit photographer.

Some of the stories attached to recognition photographs are extraordinary. A particularly interesting one concerns the production of a picture of a Chinese man and his son, made by Wyllie for one of the psychical research societies on the west coast of America. The society had expressed a hope that Wyllie might be able to obtain a spirit form on a photograph of someone who was wholly ignorant of Spiritualism. Accordingly, when Charlie, a Chinese laundryman, came in on his usual round, Wyllie asked him if he would like to sit for his portrait.

He was very much scared. I made his mind easy and asked him to come in a few days, and I would give him the picture. When I developed the negative, there were two extras on it – a Chinese boy and some Chinese writing. When Charlie came round I showed him the print, and he said, 'That my boy; where you catchee him?' I asked him where his boy was, and he said, 'That my boy. He's in China. Not seen him for three years.' Charlie did not know that his son was dead.

Such pictures and such stories point strongly to the genuineness of spirit photography, whether by amateurs or professionals and in spite of the fact that the mysterious extras have never been fully explained. And the phenomenon is not limited to human spirit forms, for animal extras appear regularly – if less frequently – in psychic photography.

*Are all the animal extras in spirit photography family pets? See page 1958*



# The gospel truth?

**'The third day he rose again from the dead': thus the Christian creed asserts the miracle of Christ's bodily resurrection. But is this a religious myth – or a literal truth? DAVID CHRISTIE-MURRAY reviews the evidence**

THE GREATEST MIRACLE – or the greatest illusion in history? Under which heading comes the resurrection from the dead of Jesus, called the Christ? The story is contained in all four gospels, and a reference to it in 1 Corinthians 15:3-7 probably embodies a creed dating from a period soon after Jesus's death. Here follows a summary of each account so they can be compared and contrasted.

Mark relates that Jesus was scourged and brutally treated by Roman soldiers, who buffeted him, crowned him with thorns and crucified him. He died at the ninth hour (3 p.m.) and had to be buried before the Sabbath began at 6 p.m., so that his corpse should not profane it. Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus, boldly asked Pilate, the Roman governor, leave to bury the body. Pilate, surprised that Jesus was already dead, checked with the centurion in charge before granting Joseph's request.

Joseph wrapped the body in 'fine linen'

Below: the crucified Christ is lifted from the cross. The gospels tell of his suffering: he had been brutally scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed in hands and feet (above right) and pierced in his side – too much, surely, to survive by any normal means, especially in an age when medical care was primitive at best

(was this the Turin shroud? see page 287) and hurriedly laid it in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock, the entrance of which was blocked by a great stone. Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Jesus, noted where Jesus's body was laid.

Part of Friday, all of Saturday (the Sabbath) and part of Sunday, totalling about 36 hours, comprised three days according to Jewish reckoning. Very early on Sunday, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the sepulchre to anoint the body properly with spices. They wondered who should roll away the stone from the tomb for them, and on their arrival were surprised to see a young man sitting there, clad in white. He said,

Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen he is not here: behold the place where they laid him.

But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.

Terrified and bewildered, the women fled and told no one.

The risen Christ, Mark continues, appeared first to Mary Magdalene, who told the disciples and was not believed. Then he appeared 'in another form' to two disciples walking into the country, and finally to the 11 Apostles as they ate, reproaching them for their unbelief and exhorting them to preach







the gospel throughout the world. Afterwards he 'was received up into heaven'.

Matthew adds a buffeting from the Sanhedrin (the Jewish council) to Jesus's other physical hurts. He also relates how the Jewish authorities, recalling Christ's claim that he would rise again after three days, asked Pilate to guard the body to prevent the disciples stealing it by night and claiming a miraculous resurrection. Pilate told them to use their own men, probably Jews from the Temple police, who kept order inside the Temple precincts where no gentiles were allowed.

Matthew omits Salome, mentioning only two women visiting the tomb at first light on Sunday. A great earthquake marks the descent from heaven of an angel with a face 'bright as lightning' and 'snow-white raiment', who rolls back the stone and sits upon it, terrifying the guards into stupefaction. He addresses the women in the same words as Mark's 'young man'. Filled with awe and

Right: a florid 19th-century depiction of Christ rising from his tomb, triumphing over death and corruption. On Pilate's orders a large boulder had been placed across the mouth of the tomb to ensure that the body could not be stolen, and its disappearance taken by Christians as evidence of the promised resurrection. But when some female disciples went to the tomb to anoint Jesus's body in the Jewish tradition, they found the boulder had unaccountably been rolled away, and a 'young man' was sitting there (below left). The gospels vary on this point: there are 'two young men', 'two angels', 'a young man' and 'an angel'. Whoever was sitting there was unknown to the women. According to Luke, the 'two men...in shining garments' said to the women: 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen'



stood by them in shining garments' who gave them approximately the same message as reported by Mark and Matthew, adding a reminder that Jesus had prophesied his death and resurrection. The women told the disciples and were disbelieved, but Peter ran to the sepulchre, saw the discarded grave-clothes, and departed, puzzled.

Luke then describes the two disciples' walk to Emmaus,  $7\frac{1}{2}$  miles (12 kilometres) outside Jerusalem. Jesus joined them but 'their eyes were holden that they should not know him'. They told him of the crucifixion and that certain women had found the tomb empty and had seen a vision of angels who affirmed that Jesus was alive. Other disciples visited the sepulchre and verified that the body was no longer there. Jesus expounded to them the scriptures 'concerning himself', was invited to share their evening meal and was recognised by them when, probably using characteristic gestures, he blessed and broke bread. Then he vanished from their sight. They returned post-haste to Jerusalem







and told the 11 Apostles, who reported in their turn that the Lord had appeared to Peter. While they were talking, Jesus appeared suddenly in their midst. Thinking they were seeing a ghost, they were terrified; but he invited them to touch him, showing them his wounded hands and feet and proving his material nature by eating before them. He told them to 'tarry in Jerusalem until power came upon them' – there is no mention of meeting in Galilee – and, leading them out of the city to Bethany, ascended from their sight 'into heaven'. The disciples remained joyfully in Jerusalem, worshipping daily in the Temple.

John adds that a soldier pierced Jesus's side with a spear while he was on the cross and that there came out 'blood and water', a medically accurate description of the piercing of the pericardium – a fatal wound if Jesus had not already died. John mentions a visit on Sunday morning 'while it was yet dark' of Mary Magdalene only. Seeing the stone rolled away, she ran to tell Peter and John that Jesus's body had been removed and 'we' (clearly indicating the presence of others with her) 'know not where they have laid him.' The two ran off together. John, outstripping Peter, looked into the sepulchre and saw the linen clothes lying there but remained outside. Peter pushed past him, John followed and, noting that the head-cloth was lying apart from the grave-clothes, they left, 'wondering'.

Mary Magdalene, returning to the tomb, stood outside it weeping and, stooping down,



Top: the resurrected Christ meets two disciples on the road to Emmaus. 'But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.' Seeing the risen Jesus as a stranger, the disciples told him enthusiastically of the resurrection. Later, when sharing an evening meal at Emmaus, the 'stranger' suddenly revealed himself as the risen Jesus (above). The real mystery is why no one recognised him

saw two 'angels' – whom she seems, nevertheless, to have accepted as normal human beings at the time, for when they asked her why she was weeping, she replied, 'Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him.' Turning, she saw Jesus but (perhaps because her eyes were dimmed with tears) did not recognise him. Mistaking him for a gardener, she asked him where he had put Jesus's body. He replied, 'Mary' – in such a way that she instantly recognised him. He told her not to touch him, but to tell the disciples that he was alive.

The same evening Jesus appeared among the disciples. Thomas, who was absent at the time, later refused to believe that Christ had been resurrected unless he could touch Christ's wounds. Eight days later Jesus appeared again, and Thomas was convinced.

Besides its innate improbability, the





Left: the 'Holy Ghost' (or Holy Spirit) descends upon the Apostles at Pentecost, in the form of tongues of fire. The writers of the scriptures could well have been writing symbolically, but there is no reason why real tongues of fire should not have been the 'outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace'

resurrection story can be attacked in several ways. First, perhaps the women watching the burial mistook the tomb. However, such an error would almost immediately have been discovered and rectified.

Or perhaps Jesus did not die on the cross, but only swooned, recovered in the tomb, escaped from it and was seen afterwards by one or two followers. A Roman scourging was so terrible that many victims died under it; even a short crucifixion could be fatal; the spear thrust in itself would have been lethal; the centurion – presumably experienced in such matters – confirmed Jesus's death. And how could Jesus have possibly escaped from the tomb after such ill-treatment?

Another explanation is that the body was stolen by some of the disciples who deceived the others into thinking Christ had risen. But it is highly unlikely that a religion that spread throughout the Roman Empire so rapidly, against intense persecution, could have been founded on a deception, especially as the leaders who presumably engineered the conspiracy themselves went heroically to martyrdom without one of them revealing the plot.

Or was the body removed by the Romans or the Jews, to nip Christianity in the bud? But in that case, why was it not produced the moment Christ's resurrection was begun to be preached? Or, if the body had been hidden in the wrong grave just a few minutes' walk outside Jerusalem, why was it never revealed? Peter's first preaching of the resurrection resulted in 3000 conversions – an unlikely outcome for a sermon based on a lie that could have been so easily exposed.

Critics point out that the gospel stories are full of discrepancies. However, this can be seen as a strength, as it shows there was no collusion among the writers. They also show

Right: not unnaturally, one of Jesus's disciples, Thomas, doubts that the abused and tortured Jesus could possibly have been resurrected. Understanding Thomas's scepticism, the risen Jesus prompts Thomas to feel the reality of the resurrected body, by probing the wound made by the centurion's spear



their confidence in their case by admitting, unnecessarily, details that weaken it, such as the temporary non-recognition of Jesus and their doubts. Moreover, the stories can be substantially reconciled, as a renowned scholar, N.P. Williams, has shown in his *The first Easter morning*. However, the events recorded in the New Testament may have been telescoped by writers whose conventions did not include rigorous adherence to chronology.

Of the nature of Christ's resurrection body, which could apparently materialise or dematerialise at will, psychical research perhaps has something to say. Matter through matter – the teleportation of objects and even people – is a well-attested phenomenon, common in reports of poltergeist cases and said to occur frequently at seances. And bilocation – the appearance of a live human being in two places simultaneously – has been reported in the lives of Sister Mary of Agreda (see page 281) and more recently, Padre Pio who died in 1968.

Believers may also find supporting evidence of the resurrection in the Turin shroud, while sceptics still maintain that some unknown, but rational, factor convinced the first disciples of something that simply never happened.

Yet the annals of psychical research and the archives of collectors of anomalous phenomena point to the reality of 'miracles' – so perhaps there is no reason to doubt that the miracles of the New Testament did happen exactly as recorded.

#### Further reading

F. Duncan M. Derrett, *The Anastasis: the resurrection of Jesus as an historical event*, P. Drinkwater 1982  
 Charles Gore (ed.), *A new commentary on Holy Scripture*, SPCK 1937  
 Frank Morison, *Who moved the stone?*, Faber & Faber 1930

Michael C. Perry, *The Easter enigma*, Faber & Faber 1959  
 N.P. Williams, *The first Easter morning*, SPCK 1920



# Who sent the scareships?

**When the 1909 epidemic of 'scareship' sightings died down, it seemed to be the end of the story – until, in 1912, new and more mysterious sightings began to be reported. NIGEL WATSON continues his investigation**

RUMOURS OF A FLIGHT by a Zeppelin airship over Sheerness, Kent, on the evening of 14 October 1912 caused questions to be asked in the House of Commons. On 27 November 1912, opposition MP Mr William Joynson-Hicks asked the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr Winston Churchill, if he knew anything about this matter. Mr Churchill affirmed that an unidentified aircraft had been reported on that date. It was heard flying over the district at 7 p.m., and caused flares to be lit at nearby Eastchurch in anticipation of a landing by the craft. However, nothing descended from the night sky, and the nationality and origin of the craft, Mr Churchill had to admit, remained a mystery.

Enquiries by the press in Eastchurch revealed that the townspeople had heard a buzzing noise between 6.30 and 7 p.m. on 14 October. But at the time it was assumed to be the sound of an airship or aeroplane making its way to the naval aviation school at Eastchurch. This was not the case, however, for no aircraft made any night flight on the date in question, from or to that base.

The public discussion that followed in the wake of the exchange between Mr Joynson-Hicks and Mr Churchill had many unforeseen consequences.

Almost immediately the German *L1* Zeppelin, which had started a 30-hour proving flight on 13 October, was blamed as the cause of the Sheerness incident. Whether or not the *L1*, or any other of Germany's



airships, visited Sheerness in 1912 is still a matter for debate. Whatever the reason for the incident, the British government decided to strengthen the Aerial Navigation Act of 1911, in order to pacify public and official disquiet. The bill was quickly passed through parliamentary channels and was given the royal assent on 14 February 1913. It gave the Home Secretary the power to prohibit aerial traffic over areas of the United Kingdom and its territorial waters. It also meant that if an aerial vehicle failed to respond to ground signals, or violated the prohibited areas, it was liable to be fired at.

Not everybody was pleased with the amended act. Feverish efforts were made to construct an efficient sky gun – but while the project remained in its experimental stages,





## The state of the art

The government of the day claimed it knew nothing of the 'scareships' of 1913. Could this really have been the case? The first two army airships, the *Nulli Secundus* I and II, had been dismantled by 1909; the first of the smaller airships that followed them, the *Beta*, made its maiden flight in 1910. Clearly whatever caused the 1909 sightings could not have been an army machine. The same applies to the 1913 sightings. The successors of the *Beta* – the *Gamma* and *Delta* – were too small to be mistaken for 'scareships',

and two airships ordered from France, and one made in Britain by Vickers, had met with disaster.

There remains the possibility that some of the Welsh sightings may be explained as misidentifications of airships built by the only private manufacturer of note, E.T. Willows of Cardiff. But these ships were familiar to local people; Captain Lindsay, for example, actually compared the 'scareship' he saw over Cardiff on 17 January 1913 with the Willows airship. The mystery remains.

Left: the Krupp 6.5-centimetre gun, designed in Germany in 1909 for shooting down airships, shown with an artist's impression of a Zeppelin. Sightings of an unidentified airship over Kent in October 1912 led opposition MP Mr William Joynson-Hicks (inset) to ask questions in the House of Commons; and in 1913 parliament passed a bill that meant that any unauthorised foreign aircraft found in Britain's airspace was liable to be fired at. Unlike Germany, however, Britain lacked an effective long-range anti-airship gun

many argued that the act was like a dog with a loud bark, but with no teeth to bite with. It was against this background of events that a new wave of phantom airship sightings began in January 1913.

Early in the morning of 4 January three witnesses, including a police constable, saw and heard an airship flying over Dover. It came from the direction of the sea and disappeared from sight to the north east. Despite a strong westerly wind, the craft, which displayed a light and made a distinct droning sound, flew at a great speed. In this case it was alleged that a French airship from a base at Verdun, 120 miles (200 kilometres) away, had been the culprit, though it is hard to imagine why the craft would have made such a perilous journey at such an early hour in poor weather conditions.

Another significant sighting was made by Captain Lionel Lindsay, Chief Constable of Glamorganshire, on 17 January. At 4.45 p.m. he saw an airship pass over Cardiff. He said: It was much bigger and moved faster than the Willows airship and left in its trail a dense volume of smoke. I called

the attention of a bystander to the object, and he agreed with me that it was some large aircraft. It disappeared quickly so giving evidence of speedy movement.

Steven Morgan, of Merthyr, saw a similar object from his bedroom window, half an hour after Captain Lindsay. He was also impressed by the trail of smoke the airship left behind it. Before he could obtain the use of a powerful telescope the craft went out of view over the Aberdare Valley.

These sightings encouraged more witnesses to come forward. One such observer was a postman from Sketty, Swansea, who saw what looked like a very bright light hovering over Clyne Woods on 21 January at 7 p.m. Four days later, a mysterious aircraft going at a speed of 25 miles per hour (40 km/h) was seen by several people in Liverpool. Although members of a local flying club had been in the air earlier in the day, they said that at the time of the sighting it had been too windy for an extended flight. On several nights at the end of January many witnesses reported seeing a bright light moving over Manchester, which puzzled them.

### Epidemic 'airshipitis'

The sightings of the airship, or airships, spread throughout the land to such an extent that a newspaper nicknamed the epidemic of reports 'airshipitis'.

When MP Mr Joynson-Hicks was asked about Captain Lindsay's sighting, he replied:

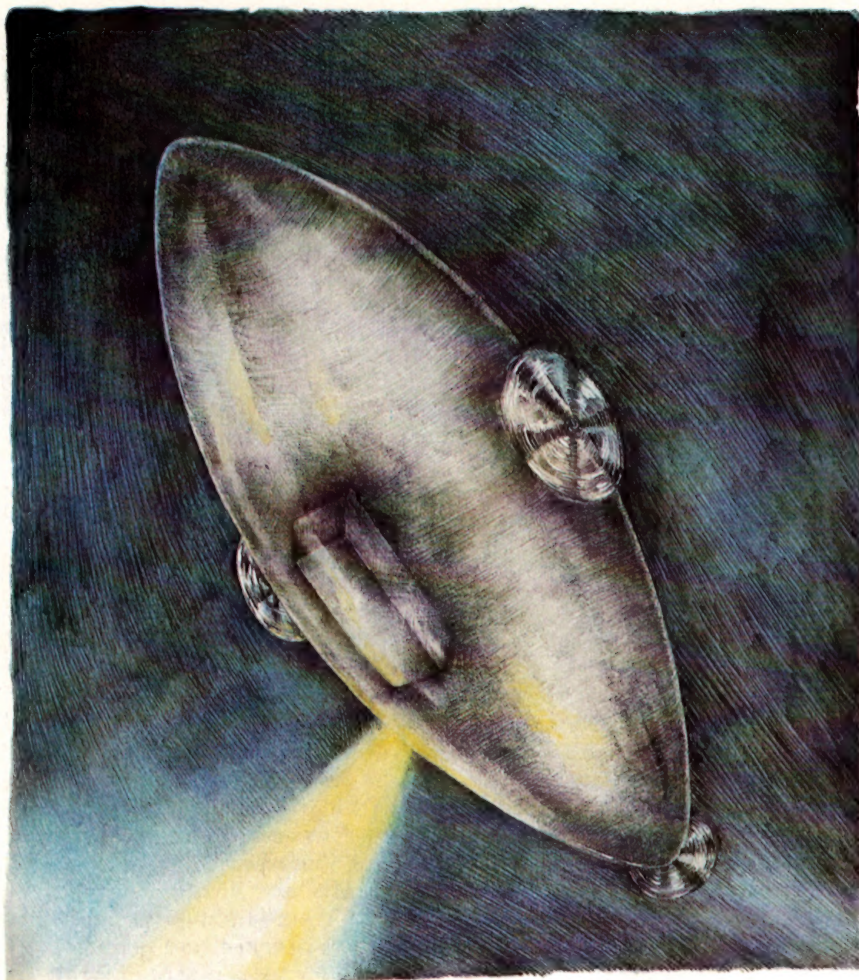
I don't doubt the report at all, for though our own aircraft can only do thirty or forty miles [50 or 65 kilometres], the Zeppelin vessels can cross the Channel. I believe, in fact, that foreign dirigibles are crossing the English Channel at will. It is a very serious matter.

Yorkshire became a new focal point for the sightings in February. Two young people in Scarborough were the first to see anything unusual in the night sky. At some time early in the month, Mr Taylor and Miss Hollings saw a light hovering over Scarborough racecourse. They were attracted by the sound of

Below: Clyne Woods, Swansea, scene of an impressive scareship sighting in January 1913







machinery, which they attributed to the light. After a few minutes a conical beam of white light descended from the craft and was played upon the racecourse for six or seven minutes. The beam of light vanished and then reappeared briefly before the thing flew away towards Selby.

Another Yorkshire sighting occurred on 21 February, between 9 and 9.30 p.m., when two men on the sand barge *Star* were dredging the river Ouse at Benningborough, and saw a light in the sky. One of the witnesses, Mr Riply, said: 'It went round and round and then stopped. It stood stationary for a short time, and then went over Billington Locks. It stood there again for some time, and then went round and round as if surveying the country.' It repeated this activity several times before finally disappearing.

At the same time in Selby, a solicitor named Mr March saw from his home a bright star over Hambleton. The star moved up and down, and backwards and forwards, as if surveying the area, or looking for something. After 45 minutes it rapidly sailed towards Leeds.

It seems that 21 February must have been a busy night for the crew of the airship – if there was, indeed, only one – for not only did many people throughout Yorkshire report seeing its lights and hearing its motors, but it was also seen over Exhall, Warwickshire and

A spectacular airship was seen by two men who were dredging the river Ouse at Benningborough, Yorkshire, between 9.00 and 9.30 p.m. on 21 February 1913. The men saw the same airship again close by at 4 a.m. the next day, and kept it under observation for around an hour and a half

Hunstanton, Norfolk.

It was at this stage in the proceedings that the War Office began to take an interest in the sighting reports, and efforts were made to discover the identity of the mystery airship; the results of their investigations were, however, never disclosed.

Hundreds of sightings were made at the end of February by people throughout the United Kingdom. Many of these observations were, however, explained as visions of Venus, or balloons sent up by jokers. This was, indeed, true in many instances.

An impressive sighting that was not so easily explained was made by Captain Lundie and his crew aboard the *City of Leeds* steamer on 22 February at 9.15 p.m. As they were leaving the mouth of the Humber they saw high over the Yorkshire coast something that 'resembled a shark in appearance', said the captain. 'It had wings on either side, and we saw the tail of the machine. No lights were visible, but owing to the rays of the moon these were not necessary. . . . We had it under observation for about five minutes. It maintained a high altitude all the time, and finally disappeared over Grimsby.'

### Mystery biplane

An intriguing sighting, possibly connected with the 'scareship' incidents, was made by a Mr Collins on board his yacht in Killary Harbour, Ireland. In late February he heard a droning sound above the bay, and saw an aeroplane coming from the direction of the sea. Suddenly it descended and landed inland. Mr Collins said:

I ran to shore thinking they might want help or information, as it might be a breakdown. I saw it was of the bi-plane type. The occupants were three in number, and one apparently a mechanic whom I could not see, tinkering at the engines. The other two were foreigners pretty stout, with florid complexions, and very intelligent foreheads, apparently Germans.

When he asked them, in German, if he could help them, one of the men answered him in French saying he did not understand, and then brusquely told him to go away as they had everything under control. Mr Collins did not see the aircraft take off again, but he did see a steamer on the horizon, which appeared to be waiting for the return of the aircraft and its impolite aeronauts.

The sheer number of sightings made in the beginning of 1913 makes this wave difficult to research and analyse, especially since there are nearly as many explanations put forward by the pundits of the period. However, mystery still shrouds many of these sightings, though UFO researchers have made a determined effort to come to terms with this material. The result of these researches should have interesting implications for modern-day UFO studies, when the data is finally collated.

### Further reading

Christopher Chant, *Aviation: an illustrated history*, Orbis 1978

Edward Horton, *The age of the airship*, Sidgwick & Jackson 1973



Dear Sir,

Through your magazine I have had the pleasure of reading a good essayist's account of the incredible paranormal phenomena that have been going on here for some years. Modestly enough, Julian Isaacs has erred mostly by omission. For example, a metal bar is in view on page 1251, along with the exiting envelope, but the fact that it too had exited (through the glass minilab) was not mentioned; nor is the fact that it entered the white envelope. And along with the spontaneous combustion on page 1253 a pen may be seen standing erect inside the minilab, and was in fact writing while the flame burned. For these two effects both to have been produced at the same time through fraudulent animation is hardly conceivable!

Where does all this leave us? As much in the dark as D.D. Home in London left Sir William Crookes, FRS, over a century ago; the latter stated that: 'Views or opinions I cannot be said to possess on a subject I do not pretend to understand.'

Allow me to make the following corrections: Professor John G. Neihardt was not of the University of Illinois but of Missouri. My personally constructed 'coffee boxes' were never 'taken apart and the seal examined', for that would itself be impossible without conspicuous damage to my seals. (This was done only with the filmed minilab.) And instead of two dice in the coffee, there was one die together with a heavy cube of lead, which I insisted must keep its position.

Yours faithfully,

Wm Edward Cox

Rolla, Missouri, USA

Dear Sir,

Having recently studied the article featuring the so-called 'weird' events in Clapham Wood, north of Steyning in West Sussex (page 1081), my wife and I decided, during a brief holiday, to visit the village and arrived there on Tuesday, 27 October 1981. We were lucky enough to meet Mr John Cornford, the local farmer mentioned in the article, and learned of the true nature of some of the incidents described by the young and perhaps gullible authors, Hamish Howard and Toyne Newton.

The body of the Reverend Neil Snelling was discovered in the 'Chestnuts' area in October 1981, a few feet from his normal route from Worthing. He had been prone to heart attacks for some time and presumably had suffered another on the day of his 'mysterious disappearance'.

The horse that 'vanished' was probably stolen by the same characters who purloined an oak table and some lead pipes from the church. As for the peculiar actions of dogs and the disappearance of Mr Cornford's own collie, he suggested that a local game keeper might be responsible. It is known that he was erecting an electric fence to protect his pheasants and certainly disliked dogs.

Concerning the 'mysterious' crater: it might well have been caused by a bomb containing phosphorus, which would account for the lack of vegetation in the area; or, if it were indeed caused by a meteorite, then sulphur from it could also provide the answer. Neither event would be a cause for 'amazement'.

The photograph of the 'goat's head' is of such poor quality that the shape of the area of mist (what else!) could be anything. The footprint resembles many such prints found in areas where there are badgers and otters. Reports of 'black shapes' and 'UFOS' are common these days, especially among the young, and certainly provide no cause for believing that Clapham Wood is any more peculiar than any other.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew M. Green

Robertsbridge, Sussex

Dear Sir,

Some additional information concerning Clapham Wood may be of interest to you. A considerable number of people have been involved in independent studies of this area. In the main their investigations have been restricted to what they consider to be a connection between the disappearance of dogs and the considerable number of UFO sightings locally.

When some interested individuals and I became involved in the investigation of this case and had spoken to many of the witnesses we began to realise that there was something else, other than the UFOS, to consider. To confirm this we had to spend some considerable time in the wood and also obtain comments from the local people. Getting them to speak was not easy. For some reason they seemed reluctant to become involved. It was almost as if they were frightened to say something.

However, our many all-night vigils at the wood did pay off: we discovered that there are two groups, involved in witchcraft and/or black magic, using Clapham Wood regularly. One of the groups does not appear to be involved in questionable activities; the other undoubtedly is. This second group, which calls itself the Friends of Hecate, was founded in Sussex about 1950 and is basically satanic. A major part of its rites is taken up with animal sacrifice and it is this fact that is of particular interest to us.

Hecate is the goddess ruler of the underworld, the queen of witches. She has three faces: in the centre, that of a woman; on the right, that of a horse; and on the left that of a dog. In your article you mentioned the disappearance of a number of dogs, which we think – although we cannot confirm it at this stage – may have been used as sacrifices. A horse also disappeared in 1978; there is very little information available about this but information we have received suggests that this may also have been used during a ritual.

Our job at present is to obtain further solid evidence of the activities of the Friends of Hecate, after which some action can be taken. However, what we already have is not confined to mere second-hand information passed to us. We have found remains of their rituals in the wood and can pinpoint three sites in Clapham that they use regularly.

In view of what we have so far discovered, I feel that the explanation for the mysterious events reported in Clapham Wood and those at Chanctonbury Ring have more to do with the occult activities that take place there than with UFOS.

Yours faithfully,

Charles P.T. Walker

Worthing, Sussex



**THE WORLD'S MYSTERIOUS PLACES - 39**  
**Indian settlement, Frijoles Canyon, New Mexico**

